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FACT SHEET

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Task Force for Criminal Justice Collaboration on Mental Health Issues

The Judicial Council's Task Force for Criminal Justice Collaboration on Mental Health Issues advises the council on mentally ill offenders and mental health courts. The purpose of the task force is to work toward improving the response of the criminal justice system for mentally ill offenders by promoting interbranch collaboration at the state level and interagency collaboration at the local level. The task force will focus on improving practices and procedures in cases involving adult and juvenile mentally ill offenders, ensuring the fair and expeditious administration of justice, and promoting improved access to treatment for litigants in the criminal justice system.

History

The Task Force for Criminal Justice Collaboration on Mental Health Issues was established on July 31, 2007, with Associate Justice Brad R. Hill, of the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District, as appointed chair. Task force members were appointed in spring 2008 and include representatives from all three branches of government, as well as criminal justice and mental health partners.

This task force is one of seven similar projects established by state supreme courts and funded by the Council of State Governments (CSG) as part of its criminal justice and mental health initiative. The CSG, after examining the problems facing state and local communities, identified best practices and developed recommendations for state and local policymakers. One of the recommendations related to the mentally ill was encouraging effective leadership from different facets of the criminal justice and mental health systems. In January 2006, the Conference of Chief Justices adopted Resolution 11: In Support of the Judicial Criminal Justice/Mental Health Leadership Initiative. This followed a resolution adopted 18 months earlier that focused on encouraging states to develop and implement plans to expand the use of problem-solving principles and methods in their courts.

Charge

The task force is charged with developing recommendations for policymakers, including the Judicial Council and its advisory committees, to improve systemwide responses to mentally ill offenders and to develop an action plan to implement the recommendations.

Specifically, the task force shall:

- Identify needs for court-related programs and services that address mentally ill offenders in adult and juvenile courts;
- Promote interbranch and interagency collaboration at state and local levels to identify barriers and create opportunities to improve case processing and outcomes;
- Disseminate locally generated best practices to trial courts and partner agencies;
- Identify methods for evaluating the long-term effectiveness of mental health programs in the courts and identify the best or promising practices that improve case processing and outcomes;
- Provide policymakers with recommendations to improve services and case processing for cases involving mentally ill offenders;
- Advise the Judicial Council and its advisory committees of funding needs and potential resources;
- Provide access to education and outreach programs designed to enhance the effectiveness of case processing and outcomes for cases that involve mentally ill offenders in adult and juvenile courts; and
- Serve as a clearinghouse for ideas, questions, and comments generated in the course of preparing recommendations.

A final report outlining the task force's achievements and recommendations will be available by early 2010.

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Additional resources:

General Criminal Justice/Mental Health Consensus Project information:
<http://consensusproject.org>; <http://consensusproject.org/ILI/>